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ABSTRACT

This preliminary report contains the proceedings of a statewide symposium held January 12-14, 1994, in Saratoga Springs, New York, to develop a statewide vision and framework for K-12 public education for the 21st century. Participants included state legislators, the Board of Regents, Education Department officials, school board members, teachers, high school students, school superintendents, business leaders, and private citizens. Ten work groups tackled the following topics: educational mission; student personal growth; learning atmosphere; school calendar; staff preparation and development; buildings, transportation, and equipment; technology; intergovernmental agency cooperation; finance; and governance. Each group was asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of New York's education system with regard to the group's topic and to translate them into goals. The groups also identified resources for and obstacles to achieving those goals. Recommendations for specific action steps are also included. (LMI)

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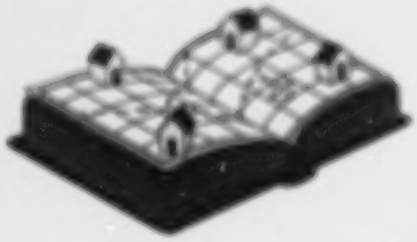

New York's K-12 Public Education in the 21st Century: A Framework for Action

Proceedings of the "Vision 21" Education Symposium
January 12-14, 1994
Saratoga Springs, New York

Sponsored by the:
Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

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Preliminary Report

December, 1994 Reprint

EA 027 773

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Senator Joseph Galiber
Assemblyman William Magee
Assemblywoman Patricia K. McGee
Assemblywoman Chloe Ann O'Neil
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Copies of this report and a hearing schedule may be requested from the Commission at the addresses and telephone numbers shown above.

New York's K-12 Public Education in the 21st Century: A Framework for Action

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New York's K-12 Public Education in the 21st Century: A Framework for Action

INTRODUCTION:

This document is a preliminary report, which contains the proceedings of a statewide symposium held January 12-14, 1994, in Saratoga Springs, New York, to develop a vision and framework for action for K-12 public education in the state's urban, suburban and rural areas requisite for the 21st century. Approximately 250 people were in attendance, including state legislators, the Board of Regents, Education Department officials, school board members, teachers, high school students, school superintendents, business leaders and private citizens. This diverse group of individuals tackled a wide variety of issues over a sustained, but brief period of time.

The conference was chaired by *Senator Charles D. Cook, Chairman, and Assemblyman Laurence E. Bennett, Vice-Chairman,* of the Commission on Rural Resources. As chair, Senator Cook's role was to assist the work group moderators and participants in accomplishing their tasks.

The ten work groups along with the moderator for each group were:

1)	*Educational Mission*	*Assemblywoman Chloe Ann O'Neil*
2)	*Student Personal Growth*	*Assemblywoman Patricia K. McGee*
3)	*Learning Atmosphere*	*Senator James W. Wright*
4)	*The Clock & The Calendar*	*Assemblyman Laurence E. Bennett*
5)	*Staff Preparation & Development*	*Senator Joseph Galiber*
6)	*Buildings, Transportation & Equipment*	*Assemblyman William Magee*
7)	*Technology*	*Senator William Stachowski*
8)	*Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation*	*Assemblywoman Barbara Clark*
9)	*Finances*	*Senator Jess Present*
10)	*Governance*	*Senator John B. Daly*

The moderators conducted the group decision-making process in order to give everyone an opportunity to participate and to encourage discussion and debate. Participants were requested to set aside all personal, political, professional and social agendas, so that their public policy recommendations would be strictly non-partisan. A variety of consensus-building processes were used within and among the groups.

The symposium was arranged as a very structured format, designed to move along from one phase to another in a timely manner. A recorder was assigned to each work group to chronicle the proceedings, which ultimately formed the basis for this report. In addition, a resource person was available in each work group to offer technical insights and information and symposium planning committee members facilitated with deliberations.

Participants were asked to be as specific and concrete as possible in their development of proposals. State legislators stressed the importance of beginning with an appreciation for the

many good things that exist within our education system and invited participants to examine the positive aspects of existing resources and structures.

Next participants were asked to identify the weak points. They strived to accurately define base problems, in order to avoid merely describing symptoms. It was noted that public policy solutions often fail because they do not match the real origin of problems.

The work groups then translated the strengths and weaknesses into goals. In arriving at goals, participants examined the following questions: Which strengths should be enlisted?; and which barriers should be surmounted?

The work groups could select as many goals as they wished initially. However, they were expected to define strategies to accomplish each goal. Therefore, the groups narrowed the selection to a number each could address in the time allotted. Participants sought to devise strategies without reference to existing structural problems. The groups were asked to develop practical results, so financial considerations were kept in mind.

The identification of resources available to implement the work groups' strategies followed. The groups referred back to identified strengths to see how these might be more effectively mobilized to achieve specific goals. Participants also identified any obstacles that would need to be overcome.

Next the work groups constructed specific action steps to implement their proposed strategies. The steps included: laws that need to be changed; or actions that should be taken by executive departments to change regulations; and/or what might be done locally or by non-government entities. Participants were not asked to cite specific laws or regulations by section or even by recitation, so long as the content was clear. Again, the main purpose of the symposium was to develop a very specific action plan or framework as an overall vision of K-12 public education in the 21st century.

The preliminary report presents the statements and recommendations of the respective work groups which may not be supported, in their entirety, by each participant or agency represented. However, participants did review their work group chapter for inclusion in the preliminary report for accuracy and completeness prior to its printing.

Follow-up public hearings will be conducted around the state in 1994-95 to entertain public comment on the report's findings and recommendations. Based on the results of those hearings, implementation of the recommended policies will begin. As part of this process, it will be essential to sort out responsibilities, i.e. where should the follow up actions occur and what agencies should be involved?

A great deal of fine work was undertaken by participants at the *"Vision 21"* symposium. The preliminary report contains many good ideas and strategies for improvement of education in New York State. Still, it is realized the symposium and preliminary report are only a start. There will be differences of opinion along the way that hopefully can be resolved so that diverse groups of individuals can direct their attention to working together on common goals and strategies.

Work Group Reports

Any of the views, findings and recommendations presented in this preliminary report are not necessarily endorsed by participants, members of the legislature, or groups represented at the "Vision 21" symposium.

Educational Mission

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Educational Mission

"To be unshackled
To improve the mind
To develop educationally
To develop an awareness and an appreciation for diversity.
To dream dreams
To aspire for greatness,
or to strive for excellence
is the birthright of every child."

-- Dr. Benjamin Mays, former President, Morehouse University

Overview:

While New York's education system has often been criticized for its fragmentation and lack of focus, the high level of shared concern for our children's future and the wide-ranging agreement on many significant issues among so many different leaders at the "Vision 21" Symposium was a great sign of hope for the future.

Opening: The State of the State's Education System

The group set the stage for the opening discussion by laying out five key questions:

1. What should be the mission of schools in the 21st Century?
   - What role should they play in the educational, social, cultural, and recreational life of a community?
   - What is the role of the school in supporting the community and the community in supporting the school?
2. How do we pursue the dual goal of equity and excellence in outcomes?

Educational Mission

Opening: The State of the State's Education System (Continued):

3. How do we address the individual needs of children while providing all children with a common core of learning?

4. How do we prepare children for the world of work and post-secondary education?

   - Should all children receive the same diploma?

   - Should all children receive a broad, liberal education or one that provides them with a specific set of skills?

5. What is the role of the State, the school board, the school staff, parents, and the community in establishing the mission of schools?

The preliminary discussion of these matters was lively, interesting and candid. A great deal of talk focused on what conditions need to be present in our schools and communities to allow all students to become productive members of society. Many people felt strongly that the state and its communities needed to provide "multiple paths" for students to reach their potential. Learning should be supported in all the places it happens.

A number of members agreed that in increasing numbers of schools the educational needs of children are not being met because of many complex problems including: poverty, poor nutrition, inadequate school facilities, difficult home environments, fractured communities, lack of resources, and a lack of commitment from many businesses.

There was recognition that today public schools are under enormous pressure to provide many services to children beyond education. Schools are beginning to realize that they must have the assistance of local agencies and the community to provide health, mental health, and other human services to students that need them.

Members were encouraged to think less in terms of either/or choices, e. g. should we pursue equity or excellence?, and more in terms of setting policy on a continuum of possible outcomes.

Almost everyone agreed during early discussions that it was extremely important to try at all levels to break down barriers between the school and the community. One way to begin this process is to involve the members of every community in defining the mission for schools.

To summarize the evening's discussion, the group proposed two broad goals:

1. "To engage the broader community in the education of children and others to ensure that all learners are provided with adequate support and a quality educational experience to become productive, self-sufficient, and contributing members to their communities and the larger global society."

2. "To create learning communities in which time, space, opportunities and resources are harnessed to support relevant education based on the needs and interests of the student and the needs of the broader community to ensure a successful transition to adult life."

Assessing where education is today and where it should be in the 21st century:

New York State's education system is one of the largest and most successful in the world. This discussion began with the recognition that the system's greatest strengths in many places are also its greatest weaknesses.

Strengths:

- Most New Yorkers seem to have a shared sense that education is important for good citizenship, for securing future opportunities, and for reaching one's full potential.
- New York's education system provides access and opportunity for thousands of young people. Broad academic and technical knowledge is offered to youngsters from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. A process is also in place that establishes minimum statewide academic competencies and seeks to apply them uniformly.
- The state provides comprehensive educational services for many students with special needs.
- In many New York locales, schools, parents, and the local community work hand in hand to help young people prepare for the challenges of modern life.
- New York's educators are among the best educated and trained teachers in the world. Our teachers are deeply committed to helping children find the pathways to success.
- The State Board of Regents generally serves the state well in its capacity as education policymakers.
- In many places our education infrastructure--buildings, buses, and technology--is the envy of much of the country and the world.

Educational Mission

Weaknesses:

- On the whole, New Yorkers have lost sight of what our schools should be. There is not a clear, shared vision of what students ought to know and what they should be able to do upon completion of school. Many people do not believe that all children have value and that all children can learn.

- New York's education system is so large, fragmented and inefficient that it has had difficulty adapting to the competitive challenges of today's world. School governance at the local, state, and national level is fractured and cumbersome and discourages accountability among parents, teachers, and administrators and stifles responsibility among students.

- Standards and expectations have been set too low for many of our young people. Schools are often focused too much on educational processes and not enough on learning and results.

- In many of New York's communities, the activities of the school have been isolated from parents, business officials, and other community members.

- In many places the key players--students and teachers--have been marginalized from the educational policy process.

- Student participants stressed that what is taught is often boring, irrelevant, and inapplicable. Students need to be more involved--from the shaping of curricula to the formation of policy--in their own education.

- Teachers often find themselves burdened by their lack of authority and autonomy. Current systems of certification, evaluation, training, and discipline are largely outdated. These problems, combined with enormous changes in classroom dynamics, have made teaching extremely difficult.

Getting from where education is today to where it should be in the 21st century.

After breaking all into these working groups and deliberating for hours, the group came to consensus on the following mission: *"The mission of the schools of the 21st century is to provide cooperative and responsible education programs and services in order to enable all learners to excel."*

What follows are the three top priorities for the group and the strategies recommended to achieve these goals:

Educational Mission

Goal #1: *Society must provide a system of education that ensures that every student has been exposed to and had the opportunity to achieve a common body of knowledge and skills.*

Strategies:

- *Raise expectations and articulate clear, statewide academic and life skills standards and requirements at key developmental junctures.*
- *Provide interdisciplinary learning opportunities to our students in a context of real world experiences. This can be done through community service, structured work experiences, mentoring situations, and with the infusion of real world standards and requirements for individual responsibility into the schools.*

Goal #2: *Society must involve the community in creating learning environments in which time, space, and resources are harnessed in support of education based on the needs of the student and the broader community.*

Strategy:

- *Develop linkages among schools, community agencies, businesses, and other organizations to involve them in the planning and decision-making process. For example, the establishment of local councils of educators, parents, students, and other community representatives to help set standards, develop programs, and evaluate outcomes.*

Goal #3: *Schools should be learning centers which engage the broader community in the education of children to ensure that all learners are provided with adequate support and a quality educational experience. Our goal is for students to become productive, self-sufficient and contributing members of their communities and the larger global society.*

Strategies:

- *Coordinate and streamline the delivery of interagency services.*
- *Require state and local agencies to remove the barriers to coordinated services.*
- *Expect state and local human services to establish progress indicators.*
- *Review and redefine the standards and expectations for students to more closely approximate the conditions and requirements that young people will face when they enter higher education and/or the world of adult work.*

Student Personal Growth

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Student Personal Growth

Underlying Assumptions:

- People like individual attention, the more positive attention the better.
- Education does not begin or end with schools.
- Work with children as soon as possible.
- Help provide support to parents.
- No age limit to personal growth.
- Need to work collaboratively.
- Start with students with where they are at.

- Initiate prevention and promotion programs.
- Student personal growth occurs 365 days a year during all waking hours.
- Different people learn different ways, we must be sensitive to that. Don't add more if you can't take something away.

- Personal growth is individualized; some learn faster, some learn slower.
- Failure is counter to personal growth.
- Success and encouragement facilitates personal growth.
- Competition does not facilitate personal growth.
- Peer and community pressure influences personal growth.
- Education priorities influence personal growth.
- Media influences personal growth.
- Need for at least one significant adult within a child's life to develop and support a student.
- Mission of schools and education must include student personal growth.
- High expectations encourage student personal growth.
- Love, responsibility, respect, trust and fairness encourage student personal growth.
- Importance of understanding the needs of children.
- Interaction between the student and learning environment.
- Educational system must change in order to maximize personal growth.

Student Personal Growth

General Strengths:

- *Ability of the child to grow.*
- *Inclusion of family participation.*
- *Using all community resources to benefit the child.*
- *No duplication of services.*
- *Follow lead of model programs already in place for student personal growth.*
- *Trained professionals and staff.*
- *Good body of knowledge.*

General Weaknesses & Impediments:

- *Fear of change.*
- *Administration does not understand learning theory and personal growth.*
- *Accountability of the teaching profession.*
- *Philosophical differences of what is important (e.g. curricula, extra-curricula).*
- *Absence of need and incentive to change in the education process.*
- *Lack of guidance counselors and support staff in elementary schools to address special needs.*
- *Class size.*
- *Inequitable funding formula for schools.*
- *Too much public emphasis on failure creating negative stigma; whereas, failure really can be a learning experience.*
- *Fear of litigation in the schools.*
- *Lost focus on children and learning (pre K-12).*
- *Lack of attention to the vast "middle" student. 50% of the teacher's time is spent on 10% of student behavior problems.*
- *Lack of coordinated agency support between DSS, DOH and SED. What is our mission as schools, system-wide.*
- *Society does not understand the changing role of schools.*
- *Lack of exposure and access to the global world in a rural setting (e.g. minorities).*
- *Children are in a formal education setting for only 12% of the time in schools.*
- *Continuance of ineffective programs. Political ramifications are at stake if change is made.*
- *Ineffectiveness of special education programs.*
- *Mediation only after confrontation.*
- *Lack of early intervention/prevention.*
- *Lack of truly collaborative programs and shared responsibility.*
- *Tenure is a problem in the schools - poor school staff can't be taken out.*
- *School year is too short - 180 days is not enough.*
- *Not recognizing individual learning styles.*
- *Lack of training in dealing with children having special needs.*
- *Society and the educational system are not recognizing the need for change; lack of guts to move forward with an educational mission.*
- *Preparation for students in transition.*
- *Lack of trust.*

Student Personal Growth

General Weaknesses & Impediments (Continued):

- Development of policy stifles educational activity. Policy is politically driven, too many political agendas.
- Lack of technology training.
- Gossip in teachers' rooms.
- Lack of coordination among grade levels and subject areas.
- Abdication of responsibility by all stakeholders.
- Identification and screening is subjective.
- Interruption/intrusion in the classroom.
- Schools are curriculum driven, not student need driven.
- Inflexibility of contracts.
- Education system restricts itself.
- Tendency to limit ourselves.
- Reality versus the media.
- Massive amount of paperwork, time away from direct instruction & student time.
- Tracking students.
- Lack of outreach programs for parents.
- Children are over-tested.
- Mandates.

Goal #1:

A learner-centered educational system.

Strategies:

- Establish a locally developed, coherent personal growth mission for all learners.
- Develop an individual educational plan for each student.
- Identify and address individual learner's needs through individualized educational planning, diversity, and assessment of the learner's role in the community (having a fun, safe place to learn).
- Offer all learners a personal growth program.
- Incorporate learners in establishing the personal growth program.
- Create a passion for life-long learning.
- Develop a culture which embraces diversity.

Student Personal Growth

Strategies (Continued):

- Develop an outreach support system for disenchanted stakeholders, including learners.
- Develop mechanisms that will encourage continuous family involvement.
- Teach the student, not the material.
- Shift from curriculum, assessment, instruction-driven content to learner-centered processes.
- Sponsor and support creative teaching practices and collaborative partnerships.
- Eliminate barriers to the achievement of universal responsibility and accountability.
- Provide inter/intra support service.
- Develop a sense of the learner's role in the larger community picture by giving back, in service, to the community.
- Support services in the school and community for families and learners.
- Collaboration of stakeholders, services and shared decision-making to produce ownership and commitment to take action.

Assets:

Compact for Learning, research data base, special education model, multi-disciplinary team, home economics, dedicated stakeholders, utilize existing successful model programs, shared decision-making approach, ceremonies and rituals to celebrate learning, use of political pressure, field services, college personnel and learners themselves.

Impediments:

Fractured self interest groups, lack of educational leadership, perceived barriers, negative focus, lack of ownership and responsibility, some schools do not welcome parental participation, lack of information, exploitation of variance process, lack of integration/enabling information on the compact for learning, inaction, lack of resources, lack of technology and training, sparse curriculum choices and procedures, awareness, resistance to change, lack of space and funding, negative choice of role models, media's move to sensationalize rather than respond, lack of time, training, exclusion for shared decisions, existing norms and honor roll is exclusive, lack of ideas,

Student Personal Growth

Impediments (Continued):

availability and duplication of services, time and effort, small pilots, funding, lack of utilization, contract language, misconceptions of unions, lack of funding for teacher centers, attitudes, fear, disparity, teachers often feel overwhelmed.

Resources:

Libraries, fine arts, consultation services of existing agencies (DSS, DOH, etc), Neighborhood Based Alliances, active parents teams, State Education Department (SED) variance process, teacher and union centers and assemblies.

Goal #2:

A student upon graduation will have developed a strong foundation and the skills necessary to continue lifelong personal growth (e.g. self esteem, critical and creative thinking, value education, concern for others, contributing member of society).

Strategies:

- *Develop a greater adult sensitivity to individual student needs.*
- *Train staff in both cognitive, affective education.*
- *Develop horizontal and vertical curricula across all grade levels.*
- *Pre-service and in-service comprehensive training.*
- *Expand classroom structures and strategies: cooperative learning, community service for children, conflict resolution, peer tutoring/mentoring, continuous student recognition based on the principle that success builds success, risk free and failure free environment, wind-up and wind-down school sessions, teaching life skills appropriate for the age of the student, promoting cultural enrichment.*
- *Classrooms and schools should be "customer focused" - understanding who we serve and why. Provide "customer service" training in education for all parties.*
- *Promote community support services in the schools.*
- *Develop effective prevention and promotion programs.*
- *Develop a monitoring system for all aspects of personal growth.*

Student Personal Growth

Strategies (Continued):

- Provide an individual educational plan for every student.
- Support pre-kindergarten programs for all 3-4 year olds.
- Provide parenting and child education skills.
- Minimize class sizes.
- Encourage the staff to go "beyond the contract" - the school day should not be 9-5, but more flexible.

Assets:

Asking students, available curricula and research, sharing skills of own staff, other schools, students sharing experiences with schools.

Impediments:

Time, school staff resistance, lack of respect by school staff, SED teams, money, space, resources, attitudes, community resistance, lack of teacher willingness, lack of research regarding curriculum effectiveness, "special interests" and change of roles, lack of linkages between schools and universities, lack of knowledge by university professionals, diverse priorities, unfunded mandates, lack of teacher commitment, preparation and extended effort, philosophical differences, too many students within a class, not a lot of programs available, difficult to research, high risk, lack of community resistance to areas such as AIDS, substance abuse, paperwork, few designs are available, lack of experience, community acceptance and support.

Resources:

Good trainers, teacher centers, universities, SETRC (Special Education Training Resources Center), BOCES, EPIC (Effective Parenting Information for Children), SED teams, professional organizations, civic organizations, youth centers, external human service organizations, health educators, university-based training centers, pupil personnel services, technology (e.g. video tapes), Head Start program.

Student Personal Growth

Specific Actions Recommended to Implement the Strategies:

- Develop a data base available to all people for student personal growth issues.
- Implement shared decision-making.
- Develop a method of collecting learners' input.
- Review the SED variance - meaningful participation of all stakeholders.
- Establish an information loop so that the people involved are aware of what's presently in progress (multitude of pieces of information).
- Initiate an aggressive action program to solicit the involvement and leadership of diverse populations within the educational arena.
- Educate staff to be student vs. administration oriented.
- Expand the community-school programs without restricting other school programs. Also, make sure there is adequate funding for these programs.
- Lift the certification regulations for non-school service providers and reimbursement regulations.
- Offer incentives to change ineffective educational practices.
- Abolish labels for special education teachers without a reduction in resources.
- Increase accountability for teachers.
- Promote sharing of information among agencies in order to benefit the child and educational system.
- Allow for latitude in the application of school funds.
- Increase pupil personnel services support staff.
- Support and expand the pre-kindergarten programs for children and parents at the same level as well as for grades K-12.
- Support and sponsor collaborative partnerships among agencies with shared staff responsibility and funding.

Specific Actions Recommended to Implement the Strategies (Continued):

- Eliminate grade retention for early elementary children.
- Financially support and disseminate effective prevention programs for school adjustment problems and programs that enhance student personal growth.
- SED field services need to serve as coordinators to top districts regarding information about model programs and funding sources which support innovative practices. Training and technical assistance should be provided to districts to make them aware of such programs and to facilitate their efforts in accessing these resources.
- Develop individualized education plans for each student by a multi-disciplinary group, in concert with the family and student when appropriate.
- Initiate a strong outreach effort to families to increase and continue their involvement.
- Formalize planning and meeting times for educational personnel (especially teachers) and agencies to network training activities and share ideas for children who are considered at risk.
- Eliminate all labels for special education students. Labels stigmatize and degrade; they focus on the negative and detract from the unique characteristics and qualities of our children.
- Seek the implementation and support of pre-kindergarten programs for all 3 and 4 year olds at the same level as well as for grades K-12. We are all familiar with the research and the positive effects of early intervention. In fact, one of the key successes of Head Start is that it has kept students out of special education classes. Perhaps early intervention could result in a reduction in the number and extensive costs of existing special education programs.

THREE KEY WORDS:

1. Responsibility
2. Accountability
3. Communication

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Learning Atmosphere

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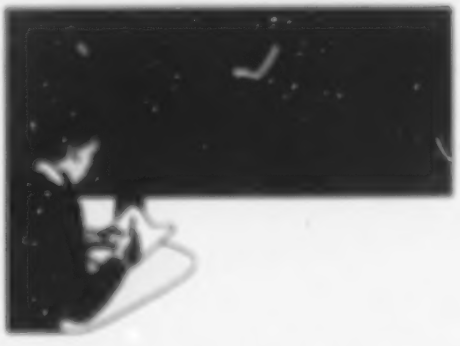
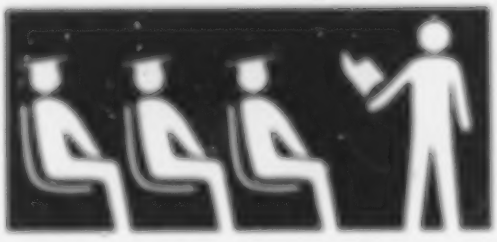
Learning Atmosphere



This group covered a wide range of topics related to the learning atmosphere for students. In addition to teachers, administrators and legislators present, there were two students in the group who were able to provide a first hand account of life in the classroom today.

The members of the group agreed that a safe and caring environment for all students needs to be created. The learning atmosphere, as defined by the group, was made up of much more than just the physical classroom. The learning atmosphere encompasses the whole environment the student lives in including home, school and the community.

From the outset, the group unanimously agreed that it must not lose sight of the most important goal of the entire conference: *improving the academic experience and performance of all students.*



The group determined that four general topics summarize the learning atmosphere:

1. The decision-making process with regard to who will determine what is vital to a good learning atmosphere;

2. Providing a safe school environment;

3. The relationship between school, community and family; and

4. The actual classroom learning environment.

First, the group focused on current strengths within those topics. Identifying strengths and assets in the system will provide the basis to work toward the goals ultimately defined by the group.

Learning Atmosphere

Strengths in the decision-making process:

- Shared decision-making; involvement of all interested parties including students.
- Compact for Learning.
- Recognition of the need to restructure our schools.
- Evolving process - reexamination of constantly changing times.
- Technology network - changing technology affects all aspects of education; better communication may be a result of building technology networks.
- Reorganization of the State Education Department.
- Involvement of parents and students in the decision-making process.
- The ability of schools to create a community for students, parents, teachers, administrators, businesses, collaborating in partnerships.
- Funding for magnet schools - magnet schools as an alternative.

Strengths in the safe school environment:

- Models - a number of models exist that schools can adopt.
- Use of quick assessments - the faster students can be assessed, the safer everyone will be.

Strengths within the school, community and family:

- School, as a resource center for students and parents.
- School/Business partnerships - provide students with a chance to work and learn about the world of business.

Strengths in the classroom learning environment:

- Diversity of students.
- Effective learning models.

Learning Atmosphere

Strengths in the classroom learning environment (Continued):

- Beginning recognition of different teaching and learning styles.
- Diversity of teachers.
- Emerging technology - students exposed to technology at a younger age.
- Movement toward student outcomes with multi-assessments; students are assessed on more than just written exams.
- Willingness to change the clock and calendar to meet the needs of students.

Next, the group examined deficiencies within the same topics. These are things which prevent the current system from working in an efficient, productive manner. The group listed deficiencies in three of the four main issue topics.

Deficiencies in the decision-making process:

- Lack of student involvement, while this was listed as a strength as well, the group felt that students were still not involved enough.
- Insufficient commitment to include everyone in the process.
- Lack of enough time and funding for ongoing teacher and staff training.
- Lack of trust between teachers and students, coupled with low teacher morale.
- Lack of focus on student achievement.
- Lack of role definition - responsibilities, changing roles of students, parents, staff, and teachers.
- Past practices - "That is the way it's always been done."
- Certain mandates.
- Lack of genuine parent participation.

Deficiencies in the safe school environment:

- Fear of litigation on the part of staff and teachers.
- Lack of focus on prevention, stop the "band-aid" approach.

Learning Atmosphere

Deficiencies in the safe school environment (Continued):

- Lack of funding for mediation, etc.
- Lack of focus on drug, alcohol, and tobacco intervention.
- Questions of curriculum relevance should be updated to deal with current problems.
- Weapons in schools.
- Lack of accountability at all levels.
- Negative media influence - focus on violence in schools.
- Decay of infrastructure - not all schools are physically safe.
- Crowded classrooms are difficult to manage.

Deficiencies within the classroom learning environment:

- Lack of staff diversity.
- Difficulty of staff recruitment.
- Stagnation and apathy of staff.
- Lack of adequate resources for staff training.
- Increasing class size; need to lower teacher to student ratios.
- Low expectations; some argue that teachers do not expect enough of their students.
- Public lack of understanding of the need to fund staff training.
- Excessive focus on needs of adults instead of students.
- Lack of consistent policies.
- Lack of such discipline alternatives, as shared responsibility.

After a thorough discussion of the strengths and weaknesses in the current system, the group discussed many goals which, if reached, would improve the learning atmosphere. Following is the list of goals that were discussed.

Learning Atmosphere

Priority goals in the decision-making process:

- Create a better network of communications and access to information on all levels.
- Genuine involvement of stake holders, specifically students. Decisions with regard to the learning atmosphere affect students the most, they should be an integral part of those decisions.
- Getting more resources for ongoing training of all of the decision makers including, parents, teachers, staff and students.
- More flexibility for local schools with state mandates and funding programs.

Priority goals in the safe school environment:

- Focus on prevention - problems should be anticipated and stopped before they ever start.
- Community involvement in making our schools safe.
- Implementation of successful intervention programs.
- Clearly defined behavior standards for staff and students including their rights and responsibilities.
- Creation of a weapon-free environment.
- Eliminate overcrowding.

Priority goals in the school, community and family:

- Formation of working partnerships between communities and schools.
- Increase parent training for effective involvement in schools.

Learning Atmosphere

Priority goals in the classroom learning environment:

- Improve teacher preparation.
- Set high expectations for students and teachers.
- Put students first.
- Narrow the learning gap; encourage all students to learn at the same level.
- More relevant curriculum; update to reflect 21st century changes.
- Commitment to continuous staff development.
- Better preparation of students for future schooling and work.

With great difficulty, since all of the goals were important, the group decided on four main goals needed to improve the learning atmosphere and the strategies needed to meet those goals.

MAIN GOALS:

1. Improve student achievement;
2. Improve staff performance;
3. Create and maintain a safe and orderly environment;
4. Involve the community.

Throughout the workshop, the group was concerned that the ultimate focus remain on improving academic performance. It was pointed out that while the role of schools has changed over the years, the focus should still be educating children.

The group also continually stressed the need to involve the students, a view which was shared by the two students in the group. The students in the group felt that their voices are often lost in the process.

Another major need noted by the group is to continue and enhance staff training. As new situations arise in schools, staff are not necessarily prepared to deal with them. The group recognized that another group at the symposium was taking a detailed look at staff training and development.

The following are the strategies the group proposed to address the four goals listed above.

Learning Atmosphere

Strategies for improving student achievement:

- Provide early intervention/schooling: it was agreed that early intervention is crucial for a students success.
- Expand assessments to go beyond written exams.
- Set clear outcomes and standards for student achievement.
- Make instruction developmentally appropriate at all grade levels.
- Redesign the curriculum to make it more appropriate to student and community needs.

Strategies for improving staff performance:

- Continuing education for faculty.
- Simplify existing teacher dismissal procedures.
- Clearly define goals and mission statements.
- Develop continuous feedback or evaluation directly related to goals.
- Insure that teachers have four-year degrees and one-year internships.
- Improve mentoring programs.

Strategies for a safe and orderly environment:

- Provide mediation and conflict resolution.
- Teach interpersonal skills to students.
- Infuse cultural understanding.
- Create family learning centers - an important resource for everyone.
- Use more role models from the community.
- Create off-site thematic schools.

Learning Atmosphere

Strategies for a safe and orderly environment:

- Eliminate weapons through use of metal detectors, hall monitors, youth officers and weapons diversion programs.
- Improve building maintenance.
- Restructure school buildings with small classes and schools within schools.
- Provide a significant adult for each at-risk child.

Strategies for involving the community:

- Expand partnerships with business for all levels.
- Develop resource guides, to share what's available in the communities and schools.
- Provide funding incentives for the integration of human services with educational services.
- Develop articulation agreements for sharing staff with other human services agencies.
- Develop and implement a curriculum for community involvement, for example fostering citizenship and cultural diversity.
- Encourage approval of day-care in schools with the population at large.
- Promote inter-generational programs.
- Publicize how the community can be involved in its school and make the information easily accessible.
- Expand parent training.

Given these strategies, the group then discussed existing resources for and impediments to the strategies. The group felt that these could be discussed in a broad sense since many existing resources and impediments applied to all the goals.

Learning Atmosphere

Existing Resources:

- Students
- Current research - volumes available
- Expertise - on many different levels
- Available funding
- Model programs
- Other State agencies
- Programs to share resources
- Professional organizations
- Teacher centers
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- Higher education institutions
- Technology
- Community
- Parents
- Corporations
- Senior citizens

Impediments:

- Fear of change and risk-taking
- Public opinion and lack of trust
- Attitude of apathy
- Statutory and regulatory constraints on spending
- Inadequate funding for early intervention and exemplary programs
- Mandates
- Lack of public awareness
- Inequity of funding
- Reactive thinking
- Lack of accountability at all levels
- Turf issues
- Competing priorities

After much debate, the group came up with a list of recommended actions to try to meet the proposed go

Learning Atmosphere

Recommendations:

- Change the state aid formula to consolidate and simplify it and provide for equitable distribution.
- Revise the building process and related regulations and revisit the WICKS law and the uniform code.
- Create a comprehensive safe schools legislation package including stronger penalties for anyone caught with a weapon on school grounds.
- Increase state funding for preventive approaches.
- Eliminate the mandates that set time requirements, and change the focus from how much time a student spends in the classroom to the student's proficiency.
- Ask the State Education Department to increase public education and awareness using the media.
- Eliminate BCTs and move toward a one-diploma system.
- Revisit the court system in regard to family court and 16-year-olds.
- Increase funding for staff development.
- Simplify the 3020a process.
- Collaborate human services delivery. There have been many instances where lack of communication has caused duplication of services or the opposite where "everyone thought someone else was doing it."

The Clock & The Calendar

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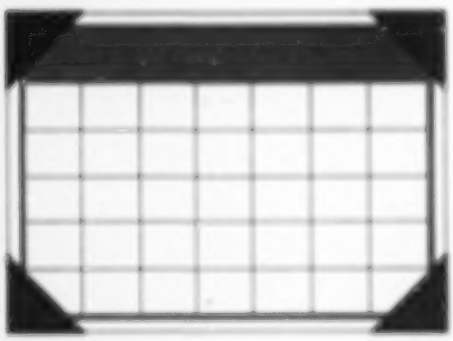
The Clock & the Calendar

Background:

The clock and the calendar can be defined as, "How long should the school day and the school year be?" Currently, to avoid a State aid penalty, New York State requires school districts to have a 180-day school calendar, excluding school holidays (specified in the Education Law), and in 1993-94, up to four days per year which could be used for teacher conferences. Regents regulations stipulate the length of the school day for elementary and secondary students.

This current school calendar was established when farming was the major industry in New York State. In most families, a significant adult was home when students returned to help with farm work, or when children took a break from school (today's summer vacation). Now a growing number of human service agencies provide services for families when school is out.

Initial Thoughts:



With this background, the clock and calendar group discussed some issues which first came to mind:

- During the traditional summer vacation, students forget a lot of what was learned in June. Therefore, a good portion of September is used to review what was last learned in June.

- How can we discuss lengthening the school day/year without first checking to see if we can make more efficient use of the current school day/year? Participants pointed out that New York has a good school system in place. We should look at what already works and see how to make it work better.

Initial Thoughts (Continued):

- Changing the length of the school day/year would require an open-mindedness on many people who are resistant to change. The "traditional" school calendar has been in place for so many years that many people, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and taxpayers would oppose changing it. Families plan vacations around the "traditional" summer vacation. Summer camps make a profit from the families that send their kids to summer camp, students earn money for college, cars, dates, etc. from working during the summer, teachers take classes during July and August, and there are many other examples which could be listed. The point is, many people resist change.

Basis for Developing Goals:

There were many viewpoints discussed, some acceptable to all members of the group, some agreed upon by some members, and some not liked by most members. Each point, however, seemed to relate to the question, "How long should the school day and the school year be?" After a couple of hours of discussion, the group came to these conclusions:

- Make education a 24-hour a day, 365-day a year process.
- The education process must include all agencies sharing services needed by students and the community (including the community).
- We need to evaluate how we can use time to more effectively and efficiently meet the individualized educational needs of all children.

The group used the above starting points to focus our goals and strategies, with the most important factor overriding everything decided -- a strong sense of urgency. We all agreed, the time for change is now.

Strengths & Assets:

The group proceeded to list the strengths and assets of the current school clock and calendar. Among a list of 21 strengths and assets, we agreed some of the most important were:

- Utilization of a school facility (physical building) as a community site.
- Competent staff.

Strengths & Assets (Continued):

- Make use of existing, successful models and pilot programs.
- The need for a shared services climate in today's schools is a concept realized and accepted by a large number of people throughout the State, including those people needed to make a shared services climate successful.
- Growing consensus for a need to change and improve today's schools.
- Awareness for increased parent, student, and community involvement in local school decisions.
- Current structure of the school day and school year make a good, solid foundation to improve on.

From these strengths and assets, we realized that New York State has a good school system to work with. We all agreed we need to change the existing system, but we have a number of strengths to work with. The physical building which we term "school", the staff, and the need for change were among the most important.

Deficiencies & Impediments:

The group then decided to list the deficiencies and impediments which would make changing the school clock and calendar a challenge. Amongst a list of 19 deficiencies and impediments, the group decided the following would pose the greatest challenge:

- Resistance of people to change and break from tradition.
- In order to increase the amount of time we use the school, (rather it be the school process or the physical building) costs will increase. Such costs include maintenance of school facilities, heating, and/or air conditioning, furnishings, equipment, teacher and staff salaries, and the list goes on. Where will this additional funding come from?
- Inability of the Governor, the Legislature, and the Regents to work together to focus on the common needs of all schools.

Deficiencies & Impediments (Continued):

- Expanding role of the school to act as instructors, social workers, providers of food, health care workers, etc. makes it difficult to restructure the current day to be more effective. There isn't a lot of room for creativity or flexibility.

- In order to expect more of teachers, staff development would have to become part of the regular overhead of the school. Staff development is essential to student development. Therefore, more time and money would be required to meet staff development needs.

- Too many mandates required of New York State schools. In order to make more efficient and effective use of today's schools, many, if not all, mandates need to be abolished. Schools need flexibility in order to change.

After listing the impediments, the group came to the consensus that changing the existing school clock and calendar would be a difficult task, but not an impossible task, which needs to be done now. Even with the 19 impediments listed in front of us, the sense of urgency was stronger than ever.

Priority Goals:

With the strengths and assets and deficiencies and impediments determined, the group went on to determine its priority goals. Three major goals were agreed upon:

1. The need to restructure the school day and lengthen the school year at local option, concurrent with an increase in the number of aid-able school days.

2. Recognizing that all students learn at different rates and within different time frames, schools should develop and implement an ongoing, flexible curriculum assessment process, and schedule.

3. The need to develop schools as a total community resource, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with all appropriate entities sharing the responsibility.

Strategies:

In order to successfully reach these goals, strategies need to be developed. The group took each goal separately and decided what changes need to be implemented to reach that goal.

Strategies (Continued):

1. The first goal proposes changing the school day and lengthening the school year at local option. Local option means letting individual school districts determine whether they need to lengthen their school year. Some schools (i.e., Lake Placid) might want to take their vacation time during the winter instead of the summer. And while some school districts may want to go to school year-round, others may need their summers off because tourism is a major source of income. The bottom line is, what works for some districts doesn't work for others. Along with the local option, there needs to be an increase in the number of aid-able school days if schools plan to lengthen their school year. Schools currently receive state aid for 180 days. As mentioned earlier, if schools are increasing their use, their costs will also increase. School districts will need help in financing these additional costs. Local districts and taxpayers cannot do it alone. In order to reach this goal, the restructuring of the school day must be done at the local level. Individual school districts need to determine what system works best for their area. Urban school districts and rural school districts will most likely have different needs. Whatever the needs of the district may be, the local option would allow for a lot of flexibility in determining what kind of school day works best. One idea that was constantly mentioned was restructuring the school year to be more like the college year. Schools should be able to use block scheduling for certain subjects that are harder to learn, or to work with students who require more individualized help. Again, the option needs to be at the local level. The legislature would need to pass new state laws in order to lengthen the school day and increase the number of aidable school days. These are state-level decisions. The most effective way to get legislators to listen to new ideas is to write letters to them informing them of your ideas, and to hold public hearings throughout the state.

2. The second stated goal refers to developing and implementing an ongoing flexible curriculum assessment process and schedule, due to the fact that all students learn at different rates and within different time frames. In order to reach this goal, the group developed the following strategies:

   - Provide a variety of programming options and learning strategies to achieve state and local standards.

   - Expand opportunities for students to receive portfolio or school credit for experiences outside of the traditional school setting.

   The first strategy deals with providing a variety of programming options and learning strategies to achieve state and local standards. Some examples of programming options include, allowing a school play to be used to fulfill an English requirement, or allowing members of a baseball team to use their after-school baseball playing time to fulfill gym

Strategies (Continued):

credits. As long as all students are achieving the same standards set by the Board of Regents and by local officials, the process of reaching these standards should be open to more flexibility. The traditional classroom setting is not the only place to learn anymore. Students are able to learn math through obtaining mechanical or electrical skills, as well as through learning office skills. We cannot overlook these options for learning. The traditional classroom setting works for some students, but not for all.

In order to develop and implement an ongoing flexible curriculum assessment process and schedule, we need to schedule the learning and evaluating of children differently. Regent's exams, for example, should be given when children are ready to take them, not when the exams can be delivered in the most secure way. Children need to be evaluated by the quality of what they have learned, not by the quantity. Assessment schedules need to be developed which best encourage students to learn freely. Many children lose their self-esteem because they do poorly on a standardized test, when what they really need is to be able to demonstrate what they have learned. We need to encourage our children to learn, not hinder them.

3. The last goal deals with making the school facility a total community resource, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with all appropriate entities sharing the responsibility. Basically, making the school building accessible to the whole community at any time, with the whole community sharing in the extra costs associated with this extra use. This is not a new idea since many districts already allow use of the school building. What is new is the concept of 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In order to achieve this goal, the group proposed to:

   - Advertise availability to all non-traditional populations including recreational, instructional, and technological groups.
   - Incorporate all appropriate community services and support groups including small children, senior citizens, local AA chapters, etc.
   - Allow building aid to be applied to space used for community service.

What these strategies basically entail is letting anyone use the school building at any time including basketball teams in the middle of the night, day care centers, senior citizens for arts and crafts, businesses for office use, the school library as a local library, or whatever needs the community may have. The school should be a place for all to learn, create, and

Strategies (Continued):

recreate. So much use of a school building is lost over the years because of the lack of use during non-traditional school hours. With the whole community learning, it is an indirect way of lengthening the school day and the school year.

Closing:

The clock and the calendar is a problem and solution all in one: **TIME**. How we use this time is the key to making the schools of the 21st century the best that they can be in serving the children of the 21st century.

Staff Preparation & Development

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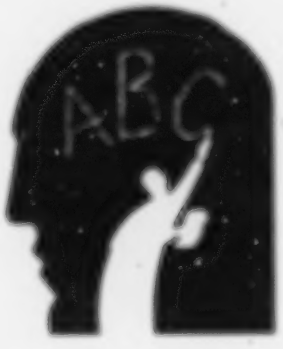
Staff Preparation & Staff Development

The work group defined school staff as including teachers, administrators, counselors, substitutes, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, et al. While acknowledging that staff preparation and staff development are interdependent, the work group felt it would be more productive to focus on each topic separately.

Staff preparation findings:

Staff preparation is defined as the college or university level education, including field experiences, an individual receives before entering the pre-k-12 school work force as an educator. Currently, 107 colleges and universities in New York State offer education degree programs for individuals, assisting future teachers to develop the necessary skills of pedagogy prior to certification.



Due to the rapid changes occurring in society, schools of education must continue to look forward and identify the needs of district schools and prepare the incoming teachers above and beyond what is currently practiced. The pre-service experience a student receives in a college or university program affects his/her success as a teacher. The better structured, holistic, hands-on and learner-centered this pre-service preparation is, the better prepared students will be for a career as an educator.

Strengths & Assets in Current Staff Preparation Practices:

- Over the past ten years, due to better working conditions and increased salaries and benefits, a higher caliber of people have been entering the field. This is proven by the fact that there is currently no overall shortage of well-prepared teachers -- *only* isolated shortages.

- There has been greater selectivity of incoming students by admissions officers at schools of education.

Staff Preparation & Development

Strengths & Assets in Current Staff Preparation Practices:

- There are 107 colleges, both public and independent, with staff preparation programs in New York State. These schools are dispersed throughout the state in proximity to urban, rural and suburban communities.
- Many college and university teacher programs are an asset to the school districts they work in. These programs, over time, have been successful in reinvigorating troubled schools and teachers on the verge of "burn out" by placing large numbers of student-teachers in these schools.
- Many colleges and universities are at the cutting edge of research in the reform of teacher education practices.
- Many colleges and universities are willing and able to adjust and implement programs in conjunction to changing teacher, student and school districts needs.
- Current State Education Department certification requirements are coordinated with job requirements.
- There are some magnet schools and special high school programs specifically designed to attract and track high school students for a career in teaching.

Deficiencies in Current Staff Preparation Programs:

Several college and teacher preparation programs are deficient in one or more areas indicated below:

- Do not prepare, at an in-depth and informed level, future teachers to work constructively with others in the school community, including, social workers, counselors, administrators, parents, etc..
- Do not coordinate adequately with school districts regarding placements and supervision. Often a student teacher is placed in a school with a minimum amount of communication between the university supervisor and the host school.
- School of Education faculty do not adequately interact with professors and department heads from other university programs (i.e. the English department head does not always converse with the History Department head, the School of Education may not communicate with the School of Business, etc.).
- Do not distinguish between the differences in teaching in an urban, suburban, or rural area.

Deficiencies in Current Staff Preparation Programs (Continued):

- Do not use school sites for preparation of student teachers throughout the teacher preparation program.
- Offer academic content classes which are watered down, insufficient and outdated for student-teachers. The curriculum content is often lower in the School of Education than in other schools in the university.
- Employ professors that do not model effective practice; they fail to practice what they preach.
- Do not always interrelate Special Education requirements with other teacher program requirements.
- Do not prepare adjunct faculty adequately.
- A few have not increased their academic standards.
- Offer programs which are determined by tenured faculty members who are often unwilling to change current practices.
- Do not coordinate academic program with student-teacher placement.

Goals for Staff Preparation:

- There must be constant structured collaboration between all stakeholders and school partners. College and university teacher education programs should become more involved in the district in which they place student-teachers.
- Within the college and university teacher preparation programs, there must be more articulation and communication among the students and professors of the different education levels. This includes, but is not limited to, the Pre-Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, English or a second language (ESL), Special Education and university level students, professors and departments.
- College and University preparation programs must stay current and need to increase the academic rigor of their education classes, integrate academic content, pedagogy, and practice, and better prepare students for the diverse psychological, sociological, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural aspects of learners.

Goals for Staff Preparation (Continued):

- Change the negative perception of teacher education by increasing the stature and respect of schools of education.
- There should be increased integration between pre- and in-service preparation.
- There should be meaningful and integrated practicum, balancing the academics of the specified disciplines along with real world situations.
- After a new teacher is hired, there should be some form of post-hiring, continuous development throughout the new teacher's first year of teaching.
- National professional standards should be built into college and university staff preparation programs.
- Staff preparation activities should be coordinated with cooperating teachers prior to placement. Universities should be more selective when choosing cooperating teachers.
- New and innovative, visionary teacher preparation programs should be designed, implemented and evaluated on an on-going basis.
- Two-year colleges, technical and business schools, should prepare other school personnel.

Resources:

College and university teacher preparation programs have a large number of resources in New York State they can use to improve their programs. Some of these resources are:

- State Education Department
- Board of Regents
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- Unions
- School Boards
- Teacher Centers
- Professional Organizations
- Fraternal Organizations
- Cultural Organizations
- Museums
- Parents
- Business and Community

Staff Preparation & Development

Resources (Continued):

- Public-Private Colleges & Universities
- Public-Private Elementary & Secondary Schools

Strategies & Action Steps to Implement Goals:

- Provide grants to schools of education that collaborate with school districts to redesign teacher preparation programs to implement *"Vision 21"* goals.
- Continue to improve and examine minimum teacher preparation requirements -- leading to certification, in order to better address student needs and achieve desired results.
- Create funding mechanisms to replicate successful teacher preparation programs.
- The Board of Regents should continue its course of current work on certification, focusing on learner needs and desired standards.
- Create new incentives for cooperating teachers other than tuition waivers.
- Expand loan forgiveness programs to direct candidates into areas of need.
- Reinstate funding and re-examine NYS Mentor Teacher Intern Programs consistent with *"Vision 21"* recommendations.
- Establish some form of post-hiring, continuous development throughout the new teacher's first year of teaching. This means implementing more Mentor-Intern programs, using master teachers as cooperating teachers and improving links between preparation and practice.

Staff Preparation & Development

STAFF DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

Staff Development is the on-going instruction, study and learning leading to increased professionalization of school personnel. Staff development is a vehicle used to expand the knowledge base and roles of teachers, administrators and other school personnel in order to better serve the students and implement reforms.

Strengths & Assets in Current Staff Development Programs:

- There are many diverse providers of staff development including: Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), unions, the State Education Department, teacher centers, businesses, school districts, colleges and universities.
- There is an awareness of the need for staff development and a commitment by school personnel to life long learning.
- Staff development promotes cooperation and eliminates isolation between teachers, administrators and other school personnel.
- Existing, successful mentor-intern programs.
- The School calendar promotes staff development (summers, before Labor Day, after Regents exams, etc.).
- There are some funds available for staff development programs.

Weaknesses & Impediments:

- Inefficient and insufficient amounts of time and money are spent on staff development.
- Most staff development is disjointed; it is not comprehensive or long-term.
- It does not involve <u>all</u> school employees such as, substitute teachers.
- There is a lack of understanding by school personnel of the services Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) provides for teachers.
- Staff development programs are implemented with insufficient employee voice/choice.

Staff Preparation & Development

Weaknesses & Impediments (Continued):

- There is a lack of any extrinsic reward system for taking part in staff development programs.
- Some staff development programs lack relevancy with the classroom and real world.
- There is a lack of overall commitment for (in both money and time) and value placed on the practice of school staff development.
- Many programs lack specific evaluation criteria.

Goals for Staff Development:

- There needs to be a greater overall commitment at all levels in producing structured, goal-oriented staff development programs. Built into these programs should be an appropriate reward system tied to learner results.
- Staff development programs should be focused, site-based, locally-centered, long-term and consistent with school and community needs.
- Staff development should be used to develop career paths and increase professional status of teachers, administrators, and other school personnel.
- Staff Development must be evaluated according to high standards and its effect on a student's learning.
- Pre- and in-service education programs should be linked.
- There should be collaboration among all stakeholders and school partners, especially students, for planning staff development programs.
- New models for staff development need to be cultivated and implemented. Theory-based methods and strategies must be improved.
- Increased articulation is needed among pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary teachers.
- First year mentor-intern programs need to be more widespread and state funded.
- Staff development must focus on broad learner/customer needs.

Staff Preparation & Development

Goals for Staff Development (Continued):

- Staff development must be dynamic, ongoing and proactive. It should be geared towards the professionalization of teaching.

- More coordination must take place among staff development providers, i.e. unions, schools, universities, etc..

Resources:

Some of the many different organizations in New York State that can be looked upon as valuable resources in developing improved staff development programs and practices are:

- State Education Department
- Board of Regents
- Boards of Cooperative Services (BOCES)
- Unions
- School Boards
- Teacher Centers
- Professional Organizations
- Fraternal Organizations
- Cultural Organizations
- Museums & Libraries
- Media Organizations
- Parents
- Public-private Colleges and Universities
- Public-private Elementary & Secondary Schools

Staff Preparation & Development

Strategies & Action Steps to Implement Goals:

- Identify and provide state monetary support for staff development programs.
- Dedicate state funds for staff development including, but not limited to, Compact-related activities and Mentor-Intern programs. Such staff development shall be consistent with the following:
  - Local development by all constituents for horizontal/vertical staff development that focuses on broad learner/customer needs.
  - Long term/cohesive and developed in collaboration with other providers and community resources.
  - There needs to be greater follow-up support after completion of staff development programs.
  - A valid pre- and post-evaluation process must be used.
- Increase time and commitment spent on developing, implementing, and evaluating staff development programs.
- Develop an appropriate evaluation and reward system tied to student results.
- Incorporate all stakeholders, especially students, in designing and evaluating staff development programs.
- Mandate staff development programs and gear them towards the professionalization of teaching.
- Utilize other learning venues for staff development programs including: museums, libraries, historical societies, businesses, industry, etc..
- Further study of professional development related to recertification.

Buildings, Transportation & Equipment

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Buildings, Transportation & Equipment

Buildings, transportation and equipment are a common bond among the 700+ school districts in New York State. The group's consensus is that in order to anticipate and ultimately meet the needs of our students in the 21st century, we must alter the way we do business. "Business as usual" cannot be our modus operandi.

The group identified many strengths which have kept New York State in the forefront of safety. We applaud the many people who contribute to the maintenance of our existing infrastructure. We believe it's time to move from merely issuing annual reports on buildings and space requirements to providing substantive and visionary long-range planning. The group believes it's time to rethink some elements of our school aid formula in an effort to encourage preventive maintenance at the expense of new construction. While we affirm each state agency's role for helping our educational infrastructure meet a variety of important standards, we believe the time is long overdue for cooperation among these agencies for the development of common and consistent standards, and common and consistent definitions.

Our recommendations offer a modest starting point in the discourse to forge a vision of the 21st century. We feel many of our goals are attainable and many do not necessarily require the expenditure of new dollars. Rather these goals will broaden perspectives to use existing resources in creative fashions. Each of the three topics covered by our group is prefaced with background on our group's discussion in order to provide a sense of how these goals and the strategies to achieve the goals were developed.

TRANSPORTATION

Require uniform transportation standards for all children in New York State including those with disabilities transported by private providers.

- Compel related agencies to study/assess the issue of differing standards for the transportation of children by public, nonpublic, and private agency providers. Revise regulations and/or laws as necessary.

Buildings, Transportation & Equipment

Encourage regional and intergovernmental planning which encompasses an entire community focus.

- Revise state aid formula to reduce the revenue deductions which serve as a disincentive to using school buses for alternative purposes.
- Conduct informational workshops around the State to identify model programs to assist in advancing collaborative arrangements.

Maintain high standards for equipment, training and certification of bus personnel and buses.

- Assure adequate resources for continuation of standards which currently allow NYS to have an outstanding safety track record in its transportation of school children.

Establish standards for employment retention of bus drivers.

- Provide increased training.
- Make it a full-year position.
- Make health benefits available to employees.

Make transportation aid a contingent expense.

- Contingency Budget Reform.

Revisit existing practices to update for the 21st Century. (Examples: §3635 of the Education Law which prohibits children from being dropped off at a day care facility not located in the district even if the bus drives past that facility; contingent mileage limitations)

- Survey/assessment from school districts, transportation directors, etc. of regulations, laws and practices which impede operations. Revise as necessary and as possible.

Standardize definitions of "school bus" among state agencies such as: the Department of Transportation, the Department of Motor Vehicles, & the Education Department.

- Set a deadline for conclusion of discussions/negotiations of the "Tri-Agency" group. This group has already commenced meetings which have, after one year, led to no movement on standardization.

Eliminate standees on buses and modify the load capacities of school buses.

- Conduct a school district assessment of the problem; and following the conclusion of that assessment, project a potential cost to school districts if modification of load capacity were to occur.
- Change existing seat specifications to accommodate junior/senior high school students.
- Change laws and regulations, as necessary.

Assure appropriate behavior on school buses to ensure student and driver safety.

- Develop an integrated discipline program across districts.
- Create a specific review process of discipline-related problems on buses annually, as part of the annual discipline code review (include private contractors).
- Public service announcements on appropriate bus behavior similar to those on DWI.

EQUIPMENT

Make it a priority to advance the state of technology and equipment in our schools.

- Require the State Education Department to do a current assessment of technology and equipment in all districts.
- Urge the Board of Regents to act upon this goal and advance a policy paper recommending technology standards among school districts.

Assure all schools have appropriate instructional equipment.

- Define or provide a technology/instructional equipment model for use in school districts.

- Make equipment a contingent expense.
- Encourage cooperative use of technology/equipment to expand learning opportunities for children.
- Encourage cooperative purchase of equipment and technology.
- Add equipment in the school aid formulas as an annual capital cost.

BUILDINGS

Statewide inventory of educational infrastructure for purpose of statewide planning, with inventory to include number of buildings, structural quality of buildings, ADA compliance, and anticipated needs.

- Aggressive implementation of Capital Assets Preservation Program.
- SED to inventory educational infrastructure in conjunction with other agencies if necessary, and issue a final report to the Board of Regents.

Encourage more cost-effective methods of constructing and renovating school buildings.

- Repeal the Wicks Law and revise Rule 56*, as it relates to floor tiles and roofing material.
- Convene a blue-ribbon commission to review school construction practices for the purpose of identifying areas for permitting flexibility to school districts and identifying areas where cost-containment can be achieved without compromising building quality.

Collaboration among agencies and other governmental entities to provide adequate support services to school districts.

- Comprise an interagency committee to include: the Office of General Services, the State Education Department and the Dormitory Authority, in an effort to access the existing talent pool to assist in expediting the review and approval of building plans and specifications.

Encourage and create collaborative planning for flexible, multi-purpose uses and locations of school buildings.

Buildings, Transportation & Equipment

- *Require* community planning of facilities prior to construction, with certain enumerated, mandated participants.
- Assess and delineate all code-based impediments.
- Encourage study of all alternatives prior to construction.

Assure health and safety standards are applied to schools in a responsible, reasonable means.

- *Require* the Board of Regents and the Legislature, if necessary, to follow-up on final recommendations or report of the Regents Advisory Committee on Environmental Concerns.
- *Require* coordination of state agencies on any response to any health or safety related concern, including: Departments of Health, Labor, Environmental Conservation, Education, and the Attorney General.

Encourage regular and proper preventive maintenance of buildings.

- Provide building aid for certain operation and maintenance expenditures.
- *Require* public distribution of the annual Capital Assets Preservation Program.

Develop regulations which encourage joint school/business and/or other agency partnerships and ventures.

- Develop regulations, or revise where applicable, to allow new construction and other joint ventures for shared instruction.
- *Rule 56 is a Department of Labor regulation detailing the procedure to be followed for the proper removal of asbestos.*

Technology

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Technology

The main theme throughout the work sessions of the Technology group was change. The time has come to not only change the way technology is distributed, but also to change the way technology will be used in the learning process.

To begin with, the group attempted to define technology. This was no easy task, given the broad range of areas that word can encompass. However, to most effectively address the issues of concern, the focus was on digital information with a major emphasis on telecommunications. Working within that framework, the group assessed technology's impact on the state's educational system. The recommendations were both for long-term goals, and for immediate, specific actions that will enable New York state to continue to strive for academic excellence.

Strengths & Assets:

New York educators are the first to point out the many strengths and assets that already exist to contribute toward the use of technology in the classroom. All of these factors are resources that will enable the educational system to provide the quality education the students of this state deserve. They include:

- Ability to close gaps and inequities.
- Regional computer centers.
- Government involvement with economic development of industries.
- Living in a technological society with cultural expectations of knowledge about technology.
- Business and industry partnerships.
- Shared decision-making among educators.
- Public funding; cost per student is second in the nation.
- Parental support.
- Highly experienced and educated school personnel.
- State Education Department (SED) long-range plan.
- NYS already has a good base for technology, including, telecommunications.

Technology

Strengths & Assets (Continued):

- State standards for hardware allow for individual choice among districts (basic, but not inflexible standards).
- Research is second to none.
- The power of assisted technology for disabled students.
- Student Information System -- potential for expansion aid administration.
- Technology is more accessible -- prices have gone down.
- Statewide funding.
- The Compact for Learning.
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).
- NYS is a model/leader in education.
- NYS is a pocket of innovation.
- Talented, creative, and motivated educators.
- Sophisticated infrastructure.
- Statewide networks already in place.
- Public support for education.
- Technology may be a pre-condition to implementing the Compact.
- Interested student population -- motivated, creative, inspired.
- Teacher centers.
- Existing curriculum.
- Higher education network (SUNY).
- An interdisciplinary focus.
- Critical consumers/state standards.
- Financial incentives (federal, legislative, business and industry grants).
- Successful models already exist.
- Students pushing educators -- even leading the way.
- Visionary leaders in the field.
- Business, industry, private sector expectations -- an environment of technology.
- Private sector promotes the preparation of students for employment.

Deficiencies & Impediments:

While NYS has so many strengths in its educational system, it is not without fault when it comes to technology. Funding is always a critical issue, but with regard to technology, it is not the only impediment that educators come across. They include:

- Teachers are apprehensive to use and implement technology.
- Public sector often does not train entry-level educators.
- Lack of aid for staff development.
- Deficiencies in the Cooperative Services (COSERs) funding mechanism.
- Time is too limited for staff development.
- Access not available to all.

Technology

Deficiencies & Impediments (Continued):

- SED state plan has not been implemented.
- Difficulty of integration of various systems.
- Inequities in the quality of school boards.
- No provision for research and development.
- Categorical aid drives curriculum development.
- Old buildings that lack power and telephones -- difficult to modify to accept new equipment and still meet regulations.
- Lack of grass roots/user development.
- Haven't gotten rid of programs that did not work.
- SED's active engagement in curriculum development is not as strong as in the past.
- Students abuse some technology by using it for entertainment rather than a learning mechanism.
- Lack of pre-service and in-service training.
- Teacher trainers do not have in-classroom experience.
- Funding is not equally available to all.
- Staff development needs to be mandated.
- There is a narrow definition of technology (computers).
- State plan needs to be updated.
- Technology is changing rapidly -- hard to keep up.
- Regulatory process.
- Lack of incentives for special skills among teachers -- no certification.
- Student mobility -- constantly moving from one district to another.
- Over-crowded schools.
- Lack of availability of courses.
- No financial structure of schools.
- Haven't refined programs that were once successful -- need for constant redefinition.
- Biological technology is ignored.
- Lack of gender equality.
- Principals/administrators are deficient in skills -- need to be included in training.
- Need for coordination and communication between SED and the Legislature.

Priority Goals:

Implementing technology in a consistent, well-distributed fashion is worth achieving. Priority goals are broad and long-term; they represent an ideal. Listed below are what were felt to be the three most important goals regarding technology in the NYS educational system.

1. All students will have equal and appropriate access to technology for lifelong learning.

Technology

Priority Goals (Continued):

2. All staff members will have equal and appropriate access to pre-service and in-service training for technology.

3. All educational/research institutions will have access to supported (utilized) inter-operable voice, video, and data network.

Existing Resources for Goals:

Fortunately, many of the resources needed to achieve such ambitious goals already exist in New York State. A base has already been laid for building a curriculum that integrates the use of technology with day-to-day learning. Some of the resources below may need redefinition, but they are valuable nonetheless.

- Teacher centers.
- Cooperative Services (COSERs).
- Post-secondary/professional associations/unions.
- Federal entitlements, grants, and foundations.
- Local tax revenue.
- Existing and/or emerging infrastructures.
- Site-based management teams.
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).
- Industry/vendors.
- State Education Department (SED).
- Parents and communities.
- State aid.
- Technology Network Ties (TNT) monies.
- Existing model programs.
- NYS Education Department Model Schools Program.

Impediments to Achieving Goals:

The obstacles to achieving a broad-ranged use of technology cannot be overlooked. Many of the items listed below do deal with funding problems. One thing that all educators agree upon is that education is an investment. Still, money is not the solution to all of the following impediments that were found.

- Lack of student mobility.
- Erratic (declining) state funding.
- Lack of support and understanding of technology by staff and community.
- Aging buildings.

Impediments to Achieving Goals (Continued):

- Competing priorities.
- Taxpayer resistance.
- Limited capital funding.
- Lack of accountability -- return on investment/proof of performance.
- Fear of being displaced/controlled by technology.
- Focus has been on amount of equipment instead of on teaching and learning.
- Lack of advocacy/interest.

Strategies & Specific Actions:

Achieving the goals set by the educators in the *"Vision 21"* Technology Group requires a number of innovative strategies, including the need for a basic skill level for New York State, and an integration with existing curricula so that student mobility isn't an issue. All districts should have a long-range plan, in which the technological resources must be provided to do the job. Nearing the 21st century at such a rapid pace, it is critical to recognize the constant revolutionary changes that occur in technology, and to fund appropriately. Constant reassessment and evaluation of existing strategies must take place in order to ensure improvements and excellence. As more private industries reach out to communities, perhaps the educational communities should reach out to private industries to find out what technological background is needed to compete. The goal among educators is not only to enrich the students' lives, but to prepare them for their futures.

While all of the strategies listed are necessary to achieve the goals set by the technology group, there were five specific actions that can be used to work toward that end. It is recommended that:

1. As part of Rebuild New York, the State will provide an inter-operable voice, video, and data network to connect all New York State education, research, and cultural institutions to other state, national, and international networks. The State will also finance the on-premise infrastructure down to the access point at the individual work-stations with the educational institutions. Work station technology attached to the state-wide network and other technology on-premise will be classified as a long-term capital investment, rather than a current operational year expense.

2. The State will provide aid to be used for hardware, software, and in-service education in the area of technology services.

3. Hardware for instructional technologies shall be a contingent budget item.

Technology

Strategies & Specific Actions (Continued):

6. Redefine the roles and responsibilities (assignments) of teachers/staff to include time for on-going in-service research and development during the restructured school day and year.

5. The districts will be able to purchase technology services from any provider and receive BOCES aid at the district's BOCES Aid ratio.

The consensus that was reached regarding technology and its future in New York State education is the need to be willing to put forth the materials needed to improve the technology that exists in the educational system, as well as the need to incorporate new models. Working to achieve the recommendations of the *"Vision 21"* Technology group will result in a student population that is in step with the ever-changing world of technology, and in an education system that is second to none.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

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Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Scoping Session:

The group began the discussion by thinking about the following questions:

- Where does intervention start?
- Who is the person determining "needs" of the student population?
- What would a system look like where good intergovernmental operations existed?

Participants raised the following concerns, ideas, and difficulties:

- Lists of social services contacts should be disseminated among teachers and administrators, showing which agency does what, eligibility guidelines, etc.
- Information on children should be shared...sometimes legal constraints prevent this.
- It is difficult to define a "target population." At different stages of children's lives, each of them might be among the target population. Basically, all youths need access.
- Various models were discussed, including one in Herkimer County for shared services, and a Buffalo Community Schools Program. One particular school (Sweethome) contacts 13 agencies. It is a school site-based system. A social worker is the coordinator...the program is pro-active, preventive in nature.
- SUNY professionals housed on campuses are a strength — they could be brought into schools to work with students.
- Could teacher-training in colleges be expanded to instruct teachers how to access existing services? Teachers need more intensive [social work] training as part of their regular course work, similar to current training on child abuse reporting. Generally, we can't meet today's problems with yesterday's teacher curriculum.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Concerns, ideas, & difficulties (Continued):

- *We need to find out where the money is (if any) for programs and use it interactively to help each other. Various state agencies may have component programs that could be creatively meshed.*

- *An auxiliary outreach position should be created in the school to help hook up children and families to services, and advocate for services.*

- *Flexibility is the key — many community-based organizations are underutilized in terms of their own goals.*

- *We need to discuss what structures or problems exist to impede the set up of interagency outreach positions.*

- *Perhaps we could think about a coordinating council for a school district relevant to the problems there including the need for parents' higher education; the training of parenting skills, etc.*

- *Regulatory waivers are needed to break down bureaucratic problems. Can this be done on a cross-disciplinary basis? In constructing laws, state agencies could be authorized to act under a waiver authority.*

- *It's necessary to identify local needs, find out who cares...who the motivators are...make the contacts...do the outreach...keep things going.*

- *Should schools play a role in a single point-of-entry system?*

- *Keep open opportunities for intervention...keep it simple...make it accessible through any school.*

- *Top-down support is needed for family/child actions; regulatory relief for flexibility; funds for priming the pump.*

- *There are turf problems...waivers need to be obtained from state and federal agencies; there is no integration of goals and approaches, and no follow-through.*

- *Lots of access is tied to eligibility; lots of time is spent documenting. We must just open the door and remove administrative requirements. School based clinics work where they exist, there are no required payments from parents. Youth Bureaus serve all children; they're a good model. We need to locate state agencies where the kids are, just as most of the Youth Bureau sites are established. School breakfasts are income related, but there is a movement to allow universal access.*

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Concerns, ideas, & difficulties (Continued):

- After the community brainstorms, where do they go? There should be a consortium to which they can go to address community needs. Schools and other providers need to be brought into the discussion from the start. A consortium on a local basis is motivated to be the best...state and local agencies need to say "go ahead"...the paperwork can follow later.

- Partnership approaches, such as the Innovations Board for Children and Families, are needed. Local ideas such as "Coins for Toys" show how chain reactions can be stimulated.

- We need a strategic framework for cross-agency work.

- The federally-funded Job Training Partnership Council has an interagency coordinating council. Similar meetings to this were held; ideas approved; heads of agencies agreed, but never communicated to people doing the work. We need to build a new system -- present dynamics are not going to work.

- Reimbursement is an issue; so is whom to contact; who is responsible; how to look it up. Common elements that can be hooked into, and flexible approaches that are adaptable.

- The Diagnostic Related Group (D.R.G.) concept might be explored for reimbursement; but Medicaid-funded mental health care has created an accounting "nightmare" of excess documentation. At the same time, outcomes need to legitimize funding; yet accountability creates a "mandate." There's a difference between what you are supposed to accomplish [being mandated] and mandating how you do it.

- The educational system can't be held responsible totally for the success or failure of such efforts. Where do you draw the line on what schools are responsible for?

- In planning for youth services, commissioners are doing comprehensive planning.

Work group participants examined the following questions:

- What assets do we have?
- What structure should the proposed coalition have and how do we build it?
- How can we build the capacity of localities to become involved in determining goals of interagency coordination?

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Goals:

- To maximize the resources, we have to meet the needs of constituents.
- To define all children as "at risk" population.
- To define the school as the gateway to services and the entire educational environment. Schools/BOCES can decide what services they need.
- To recognize that the family is the critical component in "holding agencies accountable" for actions benefiting their members.
- To develop a teacher-training curriculum built around pupil needs identification.
- Perhaps to lengthen the school year, bring back the HeadStart model, and move more children into "at-risk" definition.

Principal goals:

Goal #1:

Maximize limited resources, the greatest of which is people, who need capacity building to most effectively deliver services to children and families to ensure educational success.

Process & Strategy:

- Institutionalize pilot programs, check on where they are today, be prepared to demonstrate that dollars are saved, now that state funding has dried up.
- Identify the people nearest to the root, deploy necessary people. Methodology and application might vary depending on whether the environment is a large city, a small city, suburban or rural.

Principal goals (Continued):

Resources needed; actions recommended:

- Give incentive grants to schools to plan collaborative programs based on successful pilots.
- Counties should look at funding streams available to support such programs.
- The State should provide technical assistance and identify needs for systems changes.
- Employ local residents in the program.

Goal #2:

Develop, monitor and evaluate comprehensive, family-focused services through the involvement of community members — including parents, students, churches, etc. — in prioritizing needs.

Process & Strategy:

- Develop a community-based collaborative network of private and public agencies that delivers services, perhaps via a county level coordinator. [The level appropriate was not agreed upon; it was felt that the county level might be too broad in non-rural areas]. Some examples given were the county-wide Job Training Partnership Act program; the school-based DSS caseworker. In Erie Co., for example, a Public/Private Coordinating Council on Children and Families plans the services to be delivered and their location. The comprehensive planning model should be followed.
- Develop broad-based community advisory councils that will work with schools and agencies in identifying needs of families and children and in establishing priorities.
- Build community technical capacity to deal with ingrained resistance to change.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Principal goals (Continued):

Resources needed; actions recommended:

- Use public policy institutes, including universities, to train locals.
- Employ the ombudsman concept as used by school boards.
- There already are some site-based shared decision-making community boards (or councils).
- A community council would be composed of local residents determining what is needed and tracking a program's ability to meet that need.

Goal #3:

Improve collaboration of governmental agencies on long and short-range planning and implementation that is consistent with priorities defined by local communities.

Process & Strategy:

- Examine state agency policies, rules and regulations, to determine whether they promote or inhibit interagency collaboration at the community level.
- Determine the role of school-based planning teams.
- Develop a model for training coordinating council staff; examine and compare existing models.
- Call county-level agencies together. This might be done by county executive, county manager, a BOCES head, or a county Youth Bureau head.

Resources needed; actions recommended:

- An executive order or memo of understanding.
- Changes to the aid formulas or development of new formulas for special aid.
- Waiver of confidentiality requirement among agencies dealing with children.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Principal goals (Continued):

Resources needed; actions recommended:

- Establish a means for savings to revert to the locality to be used for educational related services. The new foster care methodology [that encourages intensive services to families as an alternative to foster placement] is an example of returning such savings to communities that come up with cost-effective ways of achieving a given goal. All (or some) of the savings from such demonstration projects is returned to the locality to continue developing its program.

- Establish community representation on a statewide community coordinating council.

- Youth Services Boards might serve as a community council.

- Hire a social worker (at the county level, the school district level or even at the individual school level) to act as the liaison among cooperating agencies and to refer children and their families to available services.

Final Work Group Consensus Report:

The workgroup developed a mission statement, settled on three principal goals, listed eight strategies that would help achieve those goals, and divided actions to be taken into those that required local action and those that would require some state-level budgetary or statutory action.

Mission Statement:

To promote and develop collaborative efforts among health, human services, and educational agencies for the delivery of comprehensive services to assure that all children achieve academic success.

Goals:

Goal #1:

To maximize resources to most effectively deliver services to children and families at the community level.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Goals (Continued):

Goal #2:

To develop, monitor and evaluate comprehensive, family-focused services through the involvement of community members — including parents, students, churches, *etc.* — in prioritizing needs.

Goal #3:

To improve collaboration of government agencies on long and short-range planning and implementation that is consistent with priorities defined by local communities.

Strategies:

- Develop broad-based community coordination councils that will work with schools and agencies to identify needs and set priorities for families and children.
- Have state agencies examine and assess their policies and regulations to determine whether they promote or inhibit interagency collaboration at the local level.
- Develop a "how-to" model for community interagency coordinated services through monetary incentives, flexibility, regulatory relief, and administrative streamlining. Build in efficiency standards legislatively that overcome duplication of effort and allow reinvestment of savings into local coordinated services.
- Replicate successful existing programs.
- Design coordinated services in terms of measurable outcomes as developed by community councils, focusing upon educational success, including its relationship to family conditions.
- Provide a comprehensive array of services, either school-based, or school-linked.
- Build technical capacity at the local level, for the effective utilization of appropriate resources and existing or new funding streams.
- Facilitate the creation of schools/agencies coming together by hiring a social worker who acts as a liaison between school boards, teachers, counselors, and various agencies, both public and non-profit.

Intergovernmental-Agency Cooperation

Resources & Tools to Achieve Goals:

- Those which exist now or which can be developed without statutory change:
  - Advanced training of educators and service providers to be able to assess children's needs and deliver services.
  - College professors of social work, psychology and education can help design coordinated services adapted to local needs; professional social workers can provide insights on how children and families can be best served.
  - Needs assessment tools which can be replicated or adapted.
  - Community auditing/mapping processes and data analysis capabilities which can be applied broadly.
  - Community based models that are of proven success.
  - The development of process training for team-building that promotes dialog and creates partnerships among agencies. Such teams would be utilized for delivering coordinated services, adapted to each community.
  - Sharing of information between schools and agencies to the extent permitted by law.

- Those which need statutory or budgetary initiative:
  - Development of regulatory waivers, flexibility and local reinvestment of savings via legislative relief measures.
  - Maximization of access to existing funding streams for service provision, focusing on the *whole* child and family (e.g. revising school aid formulas).
  - Development of incentive grants for planning and implementation of local coordination programs.
  - Development of technical assistance capacity, either budgetarily or statutorily.

Finance

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Finance

Adequacy of Education Financing

Goal:

In order to equitably allocate state aid dollars and measure achievement in funding fairness, a school district's ability to raise local resources must be beyond question.

Important requirements/concerns:

School districts on average receive approximately 40 percent of their funding from state sources and 55 percent from local sources. It is imperative that the data used to calculate wealth measures be as accurate and current as possible. Furthermore, inaccurate data can cause significant inequities in state aid and real property tax burdens.

Strategies:

- The State should fund the training of assessors and improve the administration of the real property tax.
- Continue to improve upon the process to verify school district income data.
- The State Board of Equalization and Assessment should calculate school district equalization rates for use in the computation of state aid.
- Continue to maintain full value currency in property assessments.
- The State should conduct a study of methods of sharing property tax benefits of large commercial parcels (i.e. malls, large office complexes) and utilities over the region served by such properties.
- The pupil measure used to calculate a school district's wealth should include a portion of non-public school pupils served within the district.

Finance

State Aid:

Goal:

It is imperative that State aid to education have as much stability as possible. State aid must also be current and predictable in order to allow for both short and long term planning to meet educational goals.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the fastest growing and largest group of people living in poverty are children.

Important requirements/concerns:

There is far too much instability in state funding for education. Therefore, it is difficult for school districts to enter into long term financial planning. However, it must also be noted that in comparison to a number of states, New York does provide a relatively reliable level of funding to education.

There is a lack of sufficient state matching funds for certain expense-based state aid formulas, such as building aid.

The *Compact for Learning* provides numerous laudable goals which New York's educational system should strive to meet.

Strategies:

The stability, predictability, and currency of state aid needs to be significantly improved.

- Stability
  - Education financing should be the State's highest budget priority.

- Predictability
  - Sufficient time lag is needed between the approval of the State Budget and local school budget votes/adoptions to allow for better predictability in State aid when developing local school budgets.
  - Guarantee funding to achieve the goals which are stated in the *Compact for Learning*. The use of technology (such as distance learning) should play a prominent role in this effort.
  - State aid formulas should be designed to drive new, available state resources to those districts in need.

Strategies (Continued):

- Currency
  - Currency (which is defined as the same school fiscal year as the cost is incurred) in State funding for all capital aids and also those which relate to the education of handicapped individuals. -

School District Revenue

Goal:

School districts must have the ability to generate monies necessary to fund programs designed to produce world class students. Also, it is necessary to develop various alternative funding mechanisms to address the diversity of needs found among New York State's 693 major districts.

Important requirements/concerns:

New York must act to reduce the mounting pressure on real property taxpayers. However, the State must also provide sufficient funding to produce world class scholars. Furthermore, all of our students must be supported by an appropriate amount of staff and resources. The education community should unite in articulating to the people of New York the need for adequate and appropriate funding of education.

The fiscal dependence of the Big 5 school districts significantly impairs the ability of those school districts to provide a world class education to their students.

Strategies:

Building on the current practice of basing school funding on local real property taxes in combination with state resources, we support:

- Any new monies which the state commits to education be used to "level up" programs and school districts.

- Expansion of both the income eligibility and the size of the current real property tax "circuit breaker" system to relieve senior citizens of the rising tax burden that is driving them from their homes.

- The concept, as contained in S.1995, provides for an optional state takeover of the operational expenses of school districts.

Strategies (Continued):

Furthermore, we recommend that the Legislature undertake a study to determine the feasibility of the following to assist in funding education:

- Surcharge on the State income tax.
- State value added tax.
- Additional one percent state sales tax.
- State Gross receipts tax on utilities.
- New sources of revenue that may become available, such as voter approval of casino gambling.

The State should also review all tax exempting statutes including land which receives a real property exemption pursuant to Sections 480 and 480-a of the Real Property Tax Law.

State Mandates on School Districts

Goal:

The Legislature must move beyond rhetoric in regard to state mandates in public education.

Important requirements/concerns:

The current system of negotiating employee contracts at the local level as set forth in the Taylor Law is an inefficient system that is not functioning in the desired manner. However, other alternatives such as regional or statewide negotiations may create numerous difficulties as well.

There is currently a lack of flexibility in implementing state mandates at the local level, although it is recognized that the minimum learning standards which New York has created are a great asset to the system. Also, even with the lack of flexibility a number of local educators have implemented innovative programs.

Strategy:

A blue-ribbon commission should be appointed to conduct a thorough and careful review of all state mandates in order to promote flexibility, economy, and improved learning outcomes in New York's public schools. This commission should convene once a year and issue an update on the impact of state mandates in public schools.

Governance

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Governance

Opening:

Before launching into the assessment of the governing of New York's Education System it is important to note that the group was comprised of representatives from the Legislature, the Board of Regents, the NYS State Education Department, local school boards, the NYS School Board's Association, NYS United Teachers, school districts' administrative and teaching staff, a home instruction parent, NYS Congress of Parents and Teachers Association, State Communities Aid Association, Taxpayer Alliance, County Community Services, and the New York State Council on Rural Education. It was a diverse group with diverse opinions.

It is important to note that New York's state and local governments are responsible for three types of school districts: the Big Five City Districts, the small cities districts and the non-city districts. The reality is that New York State is very diverse culturally, socially and economically. Therefore, rules and regulations have to be flexible to reflect this diversity.

Our first goal was to decide who was responsible for New York's education system. Our working group named everyone from the students, to taxpayers, to the Governor. When we examined our list, a list that was by no means complete, we realized that although many have input, there really are four governing bodies.

Four levels of governance are:

1. The Governor;
2. The Board of Regents/NYS Education Department;
3. The Legislature; and
4. The local school boards.

In order to ascertain the group's feeling toward the existing education system, we listed what we considered were its strengths and weaknesses. Below is a brief synopsis of the strengths and weaknesses of New York's Education System.

Governance

Strengths:

- New York State spends a significant sum of money on education.
- Interagency collaboration has linked agency services with schools allowing more services for money spent. Presently at least 41 counties have begun Interagency Collaboration programs in one or more districts.
- The Board of Cooperative Educational Services has taken the lead in Interagency Collaboration.
- Some attempts at mandate relief have been made.
- There is non-partisan governing of schools through the school board (excluding the Big 5).
- A good chain of communication exists.
- Due to technology, communication throughout school districts has improved.
- The Board of Regents, as a relatively independent body.

Weaknesses:

- Fragmentation of funding streams.
- Lack of definite education mission.
- Lack of flexibility in implementing rules and regulations.
- Lack of responsibility and accountability for policy making and implementing.
- Lack of training among policymakers (i.e. some school board members).
- Insufficient funding of some mandates.
- Communication is poor, and sometimes non-existent, between the Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Regents, local school boards and communities.
- The division of roles creates a turf issue among the levels of government.
- The process of review and assessment of pupil outcomes does not have sufficient standard of measure.
- Agencies have different rules regarding confidentiality, which creates a barrier for communication and collaborative efforts.

Many of these strengths and weaknesses were not further addressed after the initial discussion because they were issues discussed by other work groups. We realize however, that the recommendations made by other working groups will eventually reach the desks of those in the government.

Once we established our opinions of the system, the question and the charge that we were to address -- are these four bodies governing New York's Education System well? Does the current structure allow them to do it well and if not what changes must be made?

After much deliberation we came to the conclusion that the Governance structure itself works, and continues to work *well* for some districts, but not for all students in the schools. We do not need broad restructuring so much as dramatic improvement in the current process. Our recommendations for the local school boards, the Board of Regents/State Education Department, the Legislature, and the Governor follows.

Local School Boards:

We must improve the performance of many local school boards. It was the feeling of the committee that there are too many school board members in this state who have no training, do not represent the community and have personal agendas that may not include educating our children. On the other hand, if school boards proved to be working for the children then they should be given more flexibility in interpreting mandates and regulations, thus giving the schools more flexibility in teaching the students. Our recommendations include:

- Required training for all board members. This would accomplish two goals:
  - It would guarantee that board members are aware of their duties and will understand the importance of their role in educating the children in their community.
  - It would let those running for the school board know that there is more to the job than showing up once a month. It would also discourage those who are not willing to put in the time and effort necessary to adequately perform their duties.
- The process for adoption of local school budgets should be consistent for all school districts.
- Conform the adoption of school budgets to the model which is in place for other local governments. In other words, let the school board pass the budget without voter approval. The rationale is that the people elect county legislators and allow them to vote on budgets; the people elect state legislators and they vote on the budget, why shouldn't the local school board, which is also elected, vote on the school budget?

Governance

The Board of Regents:

The Board of Regents was established in 1784. Its duties over the last 200 years have included exercising legislative functions concerning education policies and establishing rules for carrying into effect the laws and policies of New York State. On paper it appears that the Board of Regents has immense power. In our group discussion we question what the Board of Regents' actual role is and to what degree its power exists, to whom it is accountable, and what changes we would recommend.

Recommendations:

- Currently there is not a bi-partisan group which selects the nominees to the Board of Regents. Therefore, the selection process to the Board of Regents should be opened up through the creation of a bi-partisan panel for recommending nominees to the legislature -- as is currently done for judges.

- There was much concern about assessment of implemented programs (for example, the Regents Action Plan). What review and/or evaluation exists and what is the standard of measure for pupil outcomes?

- As creatures of the Legislature, the Regents must be accountable to the Legislature for Pupil outcomes.

- An effective standard of measure should be used to evaluate outcomes.

- Give the Regents, in conjunction with the NYS Education Department, the power to enforce current standards of performance within each school district including school finance. If standards are not met, measures can be taken by the Board, i.e. it could take over a deficient/dysfunctional school district. These actions should take place **in a timely manner**. A dysfunctional school district allowed to operate is one that deprives our children of the education they are entitled to. At the same time, the Regents must remain responsive enough and flexible enough to waive constrictive mandates and encourage local innovation.

- Communication between the Regents and the Legislature must improve. This begins with a dialogue, but ultimately requires collaboration between the two bodies.

A cr cial question was asked and then discussed at great length -- if the Regents' makes policies, but does not actually have the ability to put any money behind programs -- what power does the Board actually have? It was the consensus of the group that since the Legislature has the power of the purse, they have the power to make or break policies. The Regents then, as a creature of the Legislature, become a policy *suggesting* body, instead of a policy *making* body.

Governance

We devoted much time to the idea of giving the Board of Regents the power to distribute state aid. Although the Legislature currently performs this function, it was argued that the accountability of the Regents could be increased by controlling the resources needed to implement the policies for whose development they are responsible.

We were unable to articulate a mechanism for ensuring additional accountability on the face of this additional awesome responsibility, and therefore, could not agree. Regardless, we thought it was an important enough concept to mention.

The Legislature:

As we all know, the role of the Legislature is to make laws. With that role comes the ability to distribute funds. As previously discussed, because it controls the money, it also controls policy implementation. It does not seem likely that this will ever change. We have suggested sharing the purse strings with the Board of Regents but could not come to consensus on this issue. We did establish other recommendations:

- There should be scheduled, periodic identification and elimination of Legislative mandates that are not being implemented.
- A greater attempt should be made to follow through on laws that are mandated. Clearly defined roles for responsibility must be designed.
- The Legislature should, through the committee structure, foster dialogue and collaboration with the Board of Regents.

The Governor:

The Governor's prescribed role in the Education System does not need to change. But, communication with the Board of Regents and the Legislature must improve and the Governor must exercise leadership in this area. This would create a tripartite dialogue between the Governor, the Legislature and the Board of Regents, so that the development of the budget, education services and legislation are well coordinated.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, we ask a lot more of our schools now than we ever have before. They not only educate our children, but provide a whole range of services from pre-kindergarten to special education, to health services, to after-school programs.

We must articulate a policy for services to youth and families. This policy will require that collaboration and cooperation between executive branch agencies and the State Education Department be taken to an unprecedented degree, and the mechanism for this articulation needs to be specific – now.

It is important to note that unfortunately time was not on our side. Substantial hours were spent on the group recommendations leaving no time for developing the specific actions that are necessary to achieve our recommended goals.

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